

The April Jones murder trial verdict

After a trial lasting nearly two months, Mark Bridger has been convicted of the murder of April Jones, the young girl he snatched off the street.

The trial of Mark Bridger opened at Mold Crown Court, Wales, at the end of April. He was charged with the abduction and murder of April Jones, and with perverting the course of justice. Bridger's defence, such as it was, vacillated between total amnesia and a pack of lies. Unsurprisingly, he was convicted, and now faces spending the rest of his life behind bars.

April was snatched off the street from her home in the Welsh market town of Machynlleth in October last year. Bridger was arrested five days later, by which time her disappearance was officially a murder investigation. He has of course been questioned intensively but has always maintained that he can't remember what he did with her body.

At the time, one of April's young friends told the authorities the five year old had climbed into a car happily. Bridger's claim was that he hit her while driving – accidentally of course – and took away her body in a panic. Then he forgot what he had done with her. It would be difficult to imagine a more ludicrous defence, as prosecuting counsel Elwen Evans QC told the jury in her closing speech Tuesday.



Mark Bridger

Bridger was the only defence witness, but there was a long list of prosecution witnesses, including forensic scientist Emma Howes. The forensics was if anything more damning than the other evidence. Among other things, April's blood and DNA were found in Bridger's cottage home, which the jury visited. Perhaps most ominously, one of the many lies Bridger told in this case was one he had repeated for years; he told people he had been in the SAS, when in reality he had worked as an abattoir slaughterman.

This has to be one of the most harrowing child murder trials we have seen for a long time. The search for April's body is said to have been the most extensive certainly in Welsh criminal history, but apart from blood, DNA and what appeared to be bone fragments from a young child found in Bridger's home, no trace of her has been found.

Earlier this month, Stuart Hazell was convicted of the murder of [12 year old Tia Sharp](#) in entirely different circumstances. Her body was found; Hazell had – like Bridger – viewed child pornography on his computer, but heinous though his crime was, he was clearly disgusted with what he had become. The same cannot be said for Bridger, whose denials and loud protestations of innocence have been shameless.

After a closing speech by the defence, the judge spent yesterday morning, Wednesday, summing up, and sent out the jury around 2pm telling the 9 women and 3 men to take as long as they liked.

At a quarter past four they were sent home until this morning.

At 12.19pm, after the jury had deliberated for 4 hours and 6 minutes, Mark Bridger was found guilty on all three counts: abduction, perverting the course of justice, and most grievous of all, murder. In view of the weight of evidence against him it might be suggested that this was four hours too long, but clearly because of this and because of the manner in which this case was prosecuted, he has no grounds of appeal.



April Jones, the five year old girl who was snatched off the street as she played near her home in Machynlleth, Wales.

An official release

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